John E. Minckler and Gerald A. Diettert discuss new dietetics and heart disease drugs

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Delegates to the Montana Dietetic Association two-day convention that opened Friday at 1 p.m. at Montana State University heard about new wonder drugs in dietetics and diet in heart disease from Missoula physicians John E. Minckler and Gerald A. Diettert at the opening-day sessions.

Other speakers Friday were Mrs. Marie Berry Sopp of Billings, president-elect of MDA, and Dr. Gladys Roehm, Mrs. Mary Green, and Mrs. Martha Irwin, all of the Montana State College staff. Mrs. Edith A. Swearingen of Missoula, convention chairman, presided at the Friday afternoon sessions, and Miss Ruth Boyd of the MSU food service staff presided at the dinner meeting.

Dr. Diettert, president of the Western Montana Council of the Montana Heart Association, told the dietitians Friday afternoon that nutrition and food count in the prevention and treatment of many kinds of heart disease and complications. Now that antibiotics are available to fight infectious diseases and modern sanitation prevents such scourges as typhoid fever, many physicians consider nutrition the most important environmental factor in health, he said.

The speaker dealt with dietary factors as possible causes of various diseases of the heart and blood vessels and of diet as a means of treatment. At least two important relationships between diet and heart disease are known, he said. First is the prevention or treatment of obesity, and second is the treatment of hypertension and edema by a lower intake of the mineral sodium.

Speaking about arteriosclerosis, a condition in which a fatty substance deposited inside the walls of the blood vessels clogs up the vessels and restricts the flow of blood through them, Dr. Diettert said most medical scientists now (more)

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agree there is a relationship between the amount of cholesterol in the blood and the deposit of fat in the blood vessels. But precisely what this relationship is has not been clearly determined. There is, however, increasing evidence that there is no direct relationship between the amount of cholesterol eaten in the diet and the amount of cholesterol in the blood, according to the doctor.

Certain fats in the diet actually lower blood cholesterol while other fats raise the level in the blood, he continued. It is not yet clear why this is so, he said, but current experiments indicate that the degree of saturation of the fats may be a factor. Saturated fats - those which are solid at room temperature - usually raise blood cholesterol. Most unsaturated fats are liquid and can be poured at room temperature. Some of these do not raise blood cholesterol but actually lower it.

Recent experiments suggest that atherosclerosis or arteriosclerosis may stem from a metabolic disorder, Dr. Diettert reported. If this assumption is true, the usefulness of low-fat diets in the treatment of atherosclerosis is seriously questioned, he said.

Dr. Diettert offered five rules for persons with any kind of heart disease:
1. Eat a balanced diet. 2. Do not overeat. 3. Avoid foods that cause distress. 4. Rest and relax after every meal. 5. Follow the diet if the doctor has prescribed one.

Dr. Minckler, the dinner meeting speaker, dealt with recent advances in the use of wonder drugs in nutrition of both children and adults. Some problems of mental retardation in children are definitely associated with inborn metabolic defects and some of these can be helped by dietary control, he said.

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Turning to problems of adults, he cited the effectiveness of new drugs in the control of gout. For years gout has been somewhat subject to control by diet, but the new drugs make much more adequate dietary control of gout possible. He mentioned especially drugs that help reduce uric acid in the blood stream.

Dr. Minckler mentioned the benefits to ulcer patients of the new types of medicines being used in combination with tranquilizers. He said that new oral drugs for diabetic patients, which in many cases are replacing or supplementing insulin requirements, are making dietary control of diabetes easier for dietitians, physicians, and patients.

The doctor also touched upon the use of newer medications for the cardiac patient. The typical salt-free, low cholesterol diet followed by many heart patients is not very palatable. With these new medications, diet restrictions can often be modified to make it easier for some patients, he said.

While Dr. Minckler stressed the benefits of the newer drugs, he condemned the use of "wonder" drugs in the realm of reducing regimens. Both he and Dr. Diettert made the point in their presentations that the only magic formula for weight control is to eat less.

The MDA convention will close with a business meeting Saturday morning, Mrs. Swearingen said.